

# MS4 NEWS - Spring and Summertime Landscaping Ideas



## Help Protect our Streams with Conservation Landscaping

### What is Conservation Landscaping?

**Conservation Landscaping** is the practice of modifying the visible features of an area of land in a way that incorporates environmentally sensitive design, low impact development, non-invasive native plants, and/or integrated pest management. The purpose is to create a diverse and attractive landscape that helps to protect clean air and water and support wildlife.

### Functions of Conservation Landscaping

Conservation landscaping provides benefits in the form of clean air and water, supporting wildlife, and supporting a more beautiful and healthier human environment.

#### *Clean Air & Water*

- Native plants that are adapted to local conditions require less fertilizer and pesticides
- Trapping localized stormwater on site to ensure slow percolation and increased filtration of nutrients entering the ground water
- Reduce the amount of smog released into the air by reducing the amount of mowable lawn area

#### *Wildlife*

- Providing a diverse plant environment attracts greater diversity of fauna and beneficial insects
- Benefits migratory bird and insect corridors
- Provides local fauna with food and shelter

#### *Human Environment*

- Reduce the amount of pollution entering the environment
- Creates beautiful displays of well-maintained, natural landscaping

### Essential Elements of Conservation Landscaping

By implementing the following *essential elements of conservation landscaping*, your landscape will contribute to the restoration our watersheds by improving the region's water and air quality.

1. Landscape in ways designed to benefit the environment and function efficiently.
2. Use plants that are native to the area and appropriate for site conditions.
3. Incorporate a management plan for the prevention and removal of invasive plants.
4. Provide habitat for wildlife.
5. Promotes healthy soils.
6. Manage your landscaping to conserve energy and water, reduce waste, and eliminate or minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers.

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## Going Green with Rain Gardens

### *Reduce Stormwater Runoff, Improve Water Quality, and Enhance your Landscape*

As stormwater flows over driveways, lawns, and sidewalks, it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants. Stormwater can flow into a storm sewer system or directly to a stream, river, wetland, or lake. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, paddling, and drinking water.

### *What is a Rain Garden?*

A rain garden is a shallow depression planted with perennial plants that are tolerant of both dry and wet conditions. Rain gardens capture stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as rooftops and driveways and allow it to seep slowly into the ground. Most importantly, rain gardens help reduce the amount and improve the quality of runoff.



is 1,300 square feet and generates about 800 gallons of runoff during a single 1-inch rainfall event.

### *Why Plant a Rain Garden?*

Stormwater runoff from residential areas often contains excess lawn and garden fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, oil, yard wastes, sediment, and animal wastes which cause water pollution. Rain gardens capture runoff and it slowly filter into the ground rather than running off into storm drains, and eventually into streams and rivers. Rain gardens reduce peak storm flows, helping to prevent stream bank erosion and lowering the risk for local flooding. By collecting and using rainwater that would otherwise run off your yard, you not only return rain to the water table, but you are also creating a beautiful solution to water pollution.

### *How to Create a Rain Garden*

- Designing and planting a rain garden is much like creating any other perennial garden, with a few unique differences.
- Locate the garden where runoff can be diverted into it, at least 10 feet away from building foundations and septic systems.
- Create a shallow, saucer-shaped depression to retain runoff as it infiltrates into the soil. The garden area should be about 20-30% of the area from which it is receiving runoff.
- Amend the soil if needed to improve infiltration. A good soil mix for rain gardens is 50-60% sand, 20-30% topsoil, and 20-30% compost.
- Select native species of perennial plants and shrubs when possible as they will require less care once established. Plant flood tolerant species in the center and drought tolerant ones around the edges. Berry-bearing and nectar-producing plants attract and nourish wildlife. Some suggested plant species include:
  - Shrubs: Sweet Pepperbush; Dogwood; Shamrock Inkberry; Winterberry; Gro-Low Sumac; Lowbush Blueberry; Highbush Blueberry; Dwarf Fothergilla; Slender Deutzia; Potentilla
  - Perennials: Dwarf Aster; Swamp Milkweed; Joe Pye Weed; Coneflower; Blazing Star; Beebalm; Blackeyed Susan; Crested Iris; Foamflower; Yarrow; Sea Oats
- Apply a layer of shredded hardwood mulch to keep the soil moist and ready to soak up rain and reduce garden maintenance.

### *Rain Garden Resources*

<https://pecpa.org/wp-content/uploads/Water-Resources-Create-Your-Rain-Garden.pdf>

[http://water.rutgers.edu/Rain\\_Gardens/RGWebsite/RainGardenManualofNJ.html](http://water.rutgers.edu/Rain_Gardens/RGWebsite/RainGardenManualofNJ.html)

[https://cfpub.epa.gov/npstbx/files/cwc\\_raingardenbrochure.pdf](https://cfpub.epa.gov/npstbx/files/cwc_raingardenbrochure.pdf)